

Exploring the Manifestations, Causes and Effects Of Marginalization: The Case of ‘Wood Workers’ Among the Gurage, South-Central Ethiopia



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Abstract: This study was conducted to explore the causes and effects of marginalization and social inequality that characterizes ‘Wood Workers’ minority group in Gurage Zone, south-central Ethiopia. It carefully examines the overall living situations of ‘Wood Workers’ in terms of economic, social and political aspects within the socio-cultural context of the host society. Traditionally, this group lost the rights and privileges in the society at large and they are not equally treated similar to other groups. In this study, a qualitative methodological approach is employed in extracting information from different sources on the subject in question. The study relied mainly on primary and secondary sources. Based on the findings, as far as the causes of marginalization is concerned, the norms, beliefs and the way of life that defines the ‘Wood Workers’ and the roles they undertake in the society have been seen as extremely important factors. Moreover, the causes, levels and effects of marginalization and social inequality of these minority groups are multifaceted and alarming. Regarding the effects of marginalization, the ‘Wood Workers’ have been facing challenges such as limited access to social services like education and health services, low self-esteem, severe poverty, lack of genuine interaction with the rest of the peoples of the study area and low level of motivation to enhance their level of wellbeing.

Key Words: Marginalization, Wood Workers, Causes, Effects, Minority- Majority

I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of majority-minority interaction, marginalization is a particular form of inter-group relation between subordinate minorities and dominant majority. The idea of marginalization thus understood as the social process of being made confined to a lower social standing. In other words, marginalization is a form of social space which defines the boundaries between groups, locates the groups in the hierarchy and determines their interaction. Marginalization is well thought out to be the characteristics of all human society and universal as regards to minority groups. The relationship between minority and majority is characterized by social distance and negative attitudes. Thus, prejudice, discrimination and relegation are crucial concepts in understanding the pattern of group relationship. Ethiopia is not unique to this range, with its both local and international engagement in slavery and slave trade. Hence, there were minority groups that held the bottom in the social hierarchy and considered as commodities to be exchanged and sold in the market, due to the mere fact that they lack power and wealth in a given society. Even though such facts have been ended by a law, it has not yet changed the values and attitudes of the larger community, which is apparent in the various socio-economic endeavors of a particular society (Akale work, 2014). Marginalization was in fact has been described as a “Pan Ethiopian Cultural Trait” (Teclehaima not, 2003)

In most parts of south-western and south-central Ethiopia, there are many marginalized minority groups who engaged as potters, tanners, weavers, woodworkers and hunters. All these groups are described by their occupation. In contrast to the majority, among whom they live, they are not agriculturalists (Dena, 2003; Teclehaima not, 2003). In Gurage for example; wood work is carried out by a despised minority group, whereas in most other areas wood work can be done by any one. Likewise, ‘Wood Workers’ in Gurage Zone have been encountering different aspects of marginalization and they are called ‘Fuga’ by the rest of peoples. However, calling the ‘Wood Workers’ as ‘Fuga’ has a degrading and dehumanizing implications on the psychology and socio-cultural life of the group. Therefore, this study intended to explore the causes and effects of marginalization considering ‘Wood Workers’ as occupational minorities.

The term ‘Fuga’ is conceived differently by different societies. For instance, among the Kembata and Yam of southern Ethiopia, the term ‘Fuga’ refers to tanners and potters, among the Arsi Oromo, particularly around Shashemene, south-central Ethiopia, the term ‘Fuga’ refers to the potters only, while among the Gurage, the term ‘Fuga’, specifically refers to hunters and ‘Wood Workers’. In this regards, Alula explained that, the Gurage identify artisans according to their craft activity; wood workers are

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known as 'Fuga', blacksmiths as Nawfra and tanners as Gezha. The three groups are endogamous and that there is clear status differences between them which are known by both the farmers and the artisans themselves. In the context of Gurage occupational groups, the blacksmiths have relatively the highest status, while tanners an intermediary one, and while the hunters and wood-workers are recognized as the lowest (Alula, 1999). However, the earlier two groups have access to land and the right to till and they are respected and are not considered as polluting or impure by the Gurage farmers (Dena, 2003). Hence, therefore, it can be concluded that, in Gurage case, as in most southwestern and south-central Ethiopia, there are distinctions in status and ranking between different occupational groups, and that they do not form a single homogenous, undifferentiated bloc.

In the context of this work, 'Fuga' is a generic name representing the section of the central group of Watta who settle in Gurage. They are believed to be remnants of ancient inhabitants of the Horn of Africa and they are collectively known as Watta and they have different names by different peoples. For instance, among the Amhara, they are known as Wayto, to the Oromo as Watta, to Kafa as Manjo, to the Somalias Midgaan, Tummal and Yibir and to the Gurage as 'Fuga' (Engida work, 2013; William, 1964). Although there is slight differences in their physical appearances, 'Fuga' mainly resemble the Bantu people. Linguistically, they have their own language and in the course of time they adopted the Gurage language (Engida work, 2013). Therefore, the 'Fuga' are a low-caste occupational group of hunters and wood-workers, artisans and ritual experts among the Gurage.

This study, therefore, attempts to examine and analyze the multifaceted socio-economic and political marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' minority groups who are inhabited in south-central Ethiopia. In doing so, the study also explores the pattern of life and living conditions of the 'Wood Workers' minority group in terms of social, economic and cultural features.

II. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Description of the Study Area

Ethiopia is one of the countries in the world having diversified nations, nationalities and peoples. Among them Gurage form a particular group having their own culture, tradition, history and other traits. They are living mainly in Gurage land of south-central Ethiopia, as well as in almost all parts of the country (Engidawok, 2013). Gurage land is bordered on the south by Hadiya Zone, on the west, north and east by Oromia region, Yem Special Woreda on southwest and on the southeast by Silte Zone. Astronomically, Gurage land is located between 7° 76' and 8° 45' North latitude and 37° 46' and 38° 71' East longitude. Its land is estimated as 593,200 hectares. The Zone is divided into 13 *Woredas* and two towns' administrations. These are Abeshgie, Cheha, Enemor-Ener, Endegagn, Kabena, Ezha, Geta, Gummer, Mareko, Kokir, Muhurena Aklil, Meskan, Sodo Woredas and Butajira and Wolkitetowns' administrations. The total population of Gurage is estimated to be 1,398,945 having distribution of 680, 047 male and 718,898 female with percentage of 48.6 and 51.4 respectively. The majority of the population (90%) lives in rural areas. The nature of topography in the Zone exhibits three categories. These are the mountainous highland (represented by the Gurage Mountain chain, dividing the area east to west, having an elevation of 3600 meters), the plateau flatlands and the lowland stretching area (the western fringe of the rift valley and the Wabe-Gibe valley having an elevation of 1000 meters). With this, the area is divided into three agro-ecological Zones; namely 'Dega' or highland climate (31.6%), mid-highland climate or 'Woina-Dega' (65.3%) and lowland or 'Kolla' climate (3.1%). Most of the areas lie in the mid-highland division. The distribution of rainfall and temperature mainly follows this pattern. The annual average rainfall ranges from 200 mm to 1,400 mm per annual. The highest and lowest temperature record is 32° c and 7° respectively (Wondwosen, et. al., 2018)

The economic activity of Gurage is highly relied on, a mixed kind of cultivation; above all the cultivation of enset (*Ensetventricosum*), and cattle breeding are practiced widely; and land is the most important determining element of wealth. Gurage's settlement is characterized by the extensive growth of a banana like plant called 'enset'. Enset is the staple subsistence crop of the Gurage. The Gurage had also actively engaged in trade throughout the country (Engidawor, 2013).

Most sources forwarded that the Gurage are of Sidama origin with Semitic influences (Engidawor, 2013; Nida, 2000). Since 1888, the Gurage and have been incorporated into the Ethiopian state led by Menelik II forces after the battle of Jebdu Meda. This incorporation had multi-faceted impacts upon the socio-economic and cultural life of the people in many ways. First, as a result of incorporation, the area became an integral part of the Ethiopian state. Second, it brought about the establishment of a new structural relationship known as Nefteгна-Gebар, "riflemen-tribute payers" (Nida, 2000)

2.2. Methods and Procedures

The study was designed qualitatively as a cultural study and ethnographic research techniques were largely employed. Primary data was collected mainly through interview. Though primary data was very scanty specifically about Gurage, review was made to the very few literatures related to the subject. The data obtained from different sources was filtered and organized for triangulation and systematic analysis was made appropriately.

2.3. Objectives

The main goal of this study was to methodically examine and analyze the multifaceted socio-economic and political marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' minority groups who are inhabiting in Gurage, south-central Ethiopia. In doing so, the

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study also explores the pattern of life and living conditions of the 'Wood Workers' minority group in terms of social, economic and cultural features.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of the 'Wood Workers'

The 'Wood Workers' play a significant role in the socio-cultural and economic life of the Gurage. Their knowledge and skill serve most technical requirements of Gurage people. They are also ritual experts. Since certain magical practices and sorcery are led by 'Wood Workers', their religion most probably has had some effects on the beliefs and practices of the Gurage. With this, 'Wood Workers' rituals and beliefs fully merged with the religious institutions of Gurage (Engida work, 2013).

The 'Wood Workers' are also the main actors in the religious association for Gurage girls, the Demwamit. They perform circumcision as part of the Demwamit fertility cult, and serve as medicine men dentists and veterinarians, for which service, they receive food and more recently money (Zebiba, 2012; Dena, 2003). Demwamit is a socio-religious association that girls enter into after puberty, following circumcision by 'Wood Workers' ritual experts. Those initiated during the same year maintain group solidarity even after marriage and adulthood, engaging in several religious ceremonies held for Gurage women throughout the year. Initiation begins with girls being spirited away at night by 'Wood Worker', considering a ritual 'abduction'. This is followed by a period of seclusion for about one month in huts located in the 'bush' where initiates are kept under the training of 'Wood Workers' ritual experts. Here novices are taught in the ritual language called; *Fedwat*, which only Gurage women and 'Wood Workers' are said to speak and which is kept carefully guarded from Gurage men and strangers, it forms an integral part of the initiation rites and as a language of song and praise, is used exclusively in all ceremonies conducted for women in paying honor to their deity'. Small group of 'Wood Workers' engaged as a full timer ritual experts and this hold for female 'Wood Workers' a ritual agent as well. The 'Wood Workers' 'chiefs' are the main intermediary between Gurage men and the representatives of the deity. Both male and female 'Wood Workers' 'chiefs' assume responsibility for leading the annual ceremonies for the respective gods of Gurage men and women (William, 1964)

As explained by informants, the 'Wood Workers' in the study area have been producing and providing valuable wood products for the society; because of the fact that; the other means of survival of them are highly tough and rare due to many reasons. For instance, most of the 'Wood Workers' in the study area have too limited and unproductive land and by and large, they usually lack oxen to plough that limited plot of land. Besides, their land is highly degraded due to natural and man-made factors and as a result; it is not fertile enough. The 'Wood Workers' society in general engaged in the process of making items that are important for both rural agricultural and urban society. These items support both the 'Wood Workers' and agricultural communities of the Gurage by providing products that are not available elsewhere.

The 'Wood Workers' produce the digging stick (the double prong, iron tip and wooden haft), the basic tool used in Gurage horticulture, and without which the cultivation of en set would be at least to the Gurage is difficult (William, 1964). Felling trees, cutting wood, constructing essential cultural houses of Gurage and helping in Gurage in burial practices are some of the most important community service roles provided by the 'Wood Workers' to the larger Gurage. However, until recently, they receive no direct payment for most of these services (William, 1964; D.M. Todd, 1977). Moreover, the 'Wood Workers' craftsmen have played crucial roles in the preservation and improvement of traditional technology among those with whom they have lived; although they suffered from difficult conditions at the hands of the majority groups they are serving (Teclehaima not, 2003)

3.2. Manifestations and Causes of Marginalization

The unjust and prejudicial treatment to which the marginalized groups are subjected is manifested in different dimensions. In this regards, Freeman and Pankhurst affirms, occupational minorities in south-central and south-western Ethiopia are spatially segregated, economically disadvantaged, politically disempowered, socially excluded and culturally subordinated. These dimensions of discrimination are starkly manifested in every aspect of daily life (Dena and Alula, 2001). The causes for all manifestations of marginalization also vary. Thus, the marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' among the Gurage has economic, political and social dimensions.

According to Tamiru, one of the most important attributes of a given society is division of labour where individuals and groups engaged in different functions for survival, stability and other causes. This clearly indicates that there is division of labour and society never engage in a similar activity. However, some functions occupied by certain sections of the society are seen as less worthy than others due to unknown reasons. Societies across places and time have been devaluing of some occupations such as iron smelting/blacksmith, weaving, wood working and pottery and so on. Instead of reinforcing, respecting and recognizing, societies marginalize these groups who perform the aforementioned listed occupations (Tamiru, 2017). In this regard, informants forwarded that, the basic cause why 'Wood Workers' has been marginalized from other Gurage is because of the role they play in society where they live. Accordingly, the 'Wood Workers' role in the society of the study area is making various products that serve different purposes from wood. Moreover, the 'Wood Workers' are also forced to perform some traditional practices. Gurage people as a society have their own beliefs, traditions, norms, customs, values and way of life. Among other beliefs and traditions,

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there are some which and should be performed by 'Wood Workers'. These roles that the 'Wood Workers' play in society and beliefs and traditions of the peoples of the study area altogether have been serving a lot as a cause for the marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' in the study area.

Besides, Federica and Ingrid argued that, destructive stories are the basic causes of marginalization in socio-economic and political aspects against occupational minorities. This was through the recount of past stories, meanings of past generations are transmitted into present groups' perception, and old ideas become the current culture, the only culture known for many generations. The more stereotypes in a culture; the easier it is to form public opinion, and the more an individual engages in that culture; the more tendencies he or she becomes to the manipulation of these symbols. There was a long established perception of the 'bad habits' of the 'Wood Workers' by the majority Gurage. 'Bad Habits' refers to what is "not allowed by the bible" and associated with superstition. The other cause was "keeping the dead body for a long time in the home, blackening clothes with charcoal as a sign of grief, cutting the tip part of the uvula with a sharp blade to protect against tonsillitis, etc". This is a common phenomenon in southwestern Ethiopia that the "polluting" nature of minorities is manifested in their eating habit (Federica, 2014; Ingrid, 2014)

Economic marginalization refers that; the 'Wood Workers' are systematically marginalized from the economic systems in different ways and exposed to poorest economic conditions, through limited access to resources like land ownership and livestock production (Zebiba, 2012). According to my key informants, the 'Wood Workers' were also subjected to labour exploitation by the dominant population in which they were forced to engage in any kind of activities in the dominant population houses. As a result, they only depend on the small plot of land for their subsistence formerly given by their ancestors. There are no other supporting economic options that 'Wood Workers' are engaged to generate income and support their life mainly rather than craftworks of wood products. This made them economically more vulnerable than the dominant Gurage. Besides, the 'Wood Workers' are not allowed to cultivate inset, the staple food crop of the Gurage and nor they cross an inset field or herd cattle.

The 'Wood Workers' usually faces particular challenges to get, own and access assets and resources. For instance, the 'Wood Workers' and their children do not own land, rear cattle and do not get employment opportunities. 'These restrictions are ritual safeguard for the Gurage, who believe that the 'Wood Workers' will destroy the fertility of the soil, injure the breeding capabilities of cattle, and change the milk of a cow into blood or urine...', tasks which the 'Wood Workers' engage are to the Gurage despicable, and to hunt, and eat large game is ignoble. (D.M. Todd, 1977). Moreover, "Wood Workers' do not use employment opportunities which are available in the study area partly due to lack of the required knowledge, skill and experiences for official positions. In this regard, they could not compete and exploit the opportunities which might be provided for the society due to lack and limited capabilities. Enabling to exploit the economic opportunities such as employment; would likely lead the marginalized to live below the poverty level (Tamiru, 2017)

The political marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' is manifested in their engagement in the government administrative structures and decision making processes. In most recent times, the 'Wood Workers' have been excluded from village level political participation such as the peasant association, or service cooperative and even where they were allowed to take part, they never obtained leadership position. Political marginalization may encompass the exclusion of the marginalized groups engaging in decision making processes and the right to form association, personal/group safety from attack, the rule of law, freedom of expression and equality of opportunity (Tamiru, 2017).

According to my key informants, the cause of political marginalization was the wrong perception that assume as the 'Wood Workers' are not thought to have the ability to play such leading roles and culturally considered to be dominated. This shows a kind of rigid stereotype image of 'Wood Workers' social groups by the dominant groups in the face of flexible socio-cultural endeavors of the community. With this, almost all individuals who have the leading position of government structures are from the host society who usually biased against the marginalized groups. They are deprived from decision making processes and are not treated equally with the Gurage.

Besides, the 'Wood Workers' themselves see in particular way the dominant population as if they were naturally strong and advantaged groups that had the right to exploit the members of the 'Wood Workers' community. They could not know that it was the socio-political system hold by the dominant population that had forced them for systematized harsh treatment (Teclhaima not, 2003).

The social aspect of marginalization of the 'Wood Workers' in Gurage could be manifested in terms of the features of segregation and non-reciprocal relations. The life and status of 'Wood Workers' in Gurage society is at lower level and often differentiated by discriminations which is expressed in the events of the social life of 'Wood Workers' and the Gurage like greetings, at meal time (commensality), membership of institutions, joint labour, burial practices and most important in choice of spouses. Usually, the 'Wood Workers' are believed as sub-human and people who are ham-fisted of having social and spiritual traits to conform the norms and values of the host society of Gurage (Ingrid, 2014). For the most part, the 'Wood Workers' do not have common burial places shared with the Gurage, which was another way through which the social status of the 'Wood Workers' had been manifested. In view of this, the corpse of 'Wood Workers' usually never obscured in common place with the Gurage in the past.

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It was common to bury on separate places though such exclusions come up to an end. The graveyard reserved for the 'Wood Workers' in the burial compound is located at the back of the Gurage in such a way that it indicates lower social status of the 'Wood Workers' in their social life. The marginalized are often described as being anti-social, untrustworthy, and unreliable, liars, coward, quick to anger, lacking in morality, respect and shame. Those who are extremely marginalized are considered to be 'polluting' and 'unclean' and not to be "real people". The polluting nature of the minorities is often described as being a result of the "impure" meat that are said to be eat. (Zebiba, 2012)

The most serious aspects of social marginalization, is however, was the choice of spouses. Individuals from the 'Wood Workers' are not allowed to marry with the Gurage and such engagement would result in a very strict criticism and disapproval by the host society. Marriage between 'Wood Workers' and Gurage are strictly forbidden which is enforced and backed by ritual sanctions (Engidawork, 2013; Willian, 1964). Not only intermarriage, having sexual intercourse with 'Wood Workers' is considered as a taboo that entails serious punishment to the extent of excluding the wrong doer until certain traditional practices are carried out. This was due to the Gurage fear of contamination from direct contact with 'Wood Workers' (William, 1964). Having sexual interaction with the 'Wood Workers' are considered as breaking social rules and most polluting. Although some exceptional cases of intermarriage between occupational minorities and farmers daughters are report in recent times, related with social changes like land reform, religious conversion, education and others are reported, the husbands are usually rich, educated and migrants, intermarriage with Gurage 'Wood Workers' is still unthinkable (Alula, 1999)

Usually the settlement pattern of 'Wood Workers' society in Gurage is characterized in a small plot of common land aside at the age of the village engaging in farming or a wealthy Gurage will permit a 'Wood Worker' to erect a hut on his land at a 'safe' distance behind the homestead, in which case the landowners enjoy the rights of priority over the service which the 'Wood Workers' performs for a village. 'Because Gurage fear contamination from direct contact with 'Wood Workers', they are forbidden to enter Gurage homestead without permission, which in fact means until the occupants are at a safe distance, after which the homestead must be ritually cleansed' (D.M. Todd, 1977)

All of my informants asserted that, in all areas and levels of interaction between 'Wood Workers' and non-woodworkers, the former are disadvantaged because of who they are and what role they play in the society. In fact, the disadvantaged section of society's livelihood of being dominated in many regards is and should be unquestionable fact. Marginalization arises from the interplay of class, status, and political power, and also serves the interests of the included and the 'Wood Workers' of the study area are disadvantageous in all of the aforementioned issues. As far as the issue of class and status is concerned, 'Wood Workers' of the study area are considered as socially undermined class and have a servant status in the study area. Class and position in the study area are seen as the main marker of power relationships no matter what power it might be. In this regards, therefore, 'Wood Workers' are both powerless and voiceless. This is one of the main reasons why this topic was selected to uncover causes and effects of powerlessness and noiselessness of the 'Wood Workers' in the study area. As a result of all these disadvantages, the 'Wood Workers' of the study area are highly passively discriminated and dictated by the rest of peoples of Gurage.

The social discrimination of the 'Wood Workers' is still largely determined by birth, although there is a sluggishly change as a result of cumulative factors of movement, urbanization, involvement in trade, exposure to modern education and the influence of Socialist ideology followed by the 1974 revolution, modernization particularly in information and communication technology and religious conversion first into the Ethiopian Orthodox and Islam and more recently to evangelical churches.

3.3. Effects of Marginalization

The 'Wood Workers' were deprived from possessions of land and property. The 'Wood Workers' hold small farming land provided by their previous ancestors which in turn resulted in poor living conditions of them. Their economic and social life is still subjected to marginalization and less important position. This is manifested mainly in restrictions on production activities, social interaction and commensality, submissive greetings, and stereotypic perception about this group. In other words, the marginalization of 'Wood Workers' minority group in Gurage could be revealed simply since they are economically disadvantaged, politically disempowered and socially excluded (Zebiba, 2012). Therefore; this work is an attempt to provide a full picture on the present situations of 'Wood Workers' in line with a range of features of marginalization that characterizes them.

Tamiru and UNDP argued that; in most of the developing countries, the sections of the society most likely to be poor and the poorest are those who are marginalized because of ethnicity, religion, clan or occupation (Tamiru, 2017; UNDP, 2010). Furthermore; marginalization leads certain sections of peoples to poverty. Usually, it is not easy for marginalized groups to escape from poverty as its causes are highly complex and multiple (Kabeer, (N.D.) Besides, usually marginalized groups have a great risk of being unemployed or employed in non-safe jobs and hence be paid low, less educated, recipients of social assistance, have little political power and fewer social interactions (De Hann, 1999). In this regards, the effects, dimensions and severity of poverty and deprivation is more nuanced in the 'Wood Workers' than the majority of the peoples of the study area. The basic reasons for this is that the 'Wood Workers' were socially excluded and marginalized in many regards. Furthermore, in comparative speaking, the 'Wood Workers' are more vulnerable to shocks, emergencies and insecurities than the rest of the society.

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As explained by my respondents in the study area, 'Wood Workers' for a long time had been mandated to perform certain tasks such as producing products from woods, serving for non-woodworkers in many ways, providing ritual practices for non-woodworkers and so on. This division of labour had resulted in social division within people. Therefore, by default 'we' and 'they' category had emerged and has been an endingly continuing issue in the study area. As a result of prejudice and discrimination by the rest of people of the study area, the 'Wood Workers' were not proud of who they are and what they produce and provide for the society. Furthermore, the 'Wood Workers' lack fair recognition and human treatment by the rest of peoples of the study area.

Besides, the marginalized sections of societies are usually felt guilty of themselves; due to their prejudice and marginalization by the majority groups (Tamiru, 2017). In this regard, 'Wood Workers' themselves thought that they are not equal with the rest of the peoples of Gurage. Consequently, the children of 'Wood Workers' perceived that learning is not what is expected from them. They usually feel guilty to sit and learn together with the children of non-wood workers. In fact, most of the time, they were forced by the local authorities to go to nearby formal schools, but it was not successful yet. If they enrolled, they do not continue their formal education up to the secondary and tertiary levels (Zebiba, 2012). Considering this reality, the study believe that a lot remained to be done in the study area to empower and encourage the children of the 'Wood Workers' to be enrolled and learn in formal schools, because education is one of the crucial means that enables society to achieve many aspirations.

Finally, marginalization causes in the stratification of peoples into different categories. Besides, marginalization also separate a given society into different strata based on certain criteria such as occupation. With this, marginalization erodes social solidarity and becomes a problem for the development of democracy (Tamiru, 2017). Therefore, these stereotypes and mal-practices have lessened the worth and the potential of 'Wood Workers' in the study area. In this regards, Department for International Development explained that; when people feel, they are being judged on the basis of whom they are, they may perform less well. When people expect prejudice, it can undermine their motivation to achieve. Together with social stigma and the ill-perceptions of 'Wood Workers' about themselves, becomes a paramount contributor for multiple deprivations of 'Wood Workers' in the study area (Department for International Development, 2005). Thus, marginalization deprives the 'Wood Workers' of the study area choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a choice to claim their rights.

CONCLUSION

The 'Wood Workers' societies are the most excluded and marginalized groups in south-central Ethiopia. These groups are marginalized because of their descent, pattern of life, and occupations. Even though the reasons for being marginalized such as eating religiously prohibited wild animals and occupational tasks have shown a sort of reduction, the wrong perceptions and social stereotype of the majority community against the 'Wood Workers' society are still continued. The 'Wood Workers' society in Gurage remains an excluded and highly marginalized groups in the governance, resource allocation, political, cultural and economic matters of the community. And they are described as unhealthy, anti-social, dishonest, unreliable, backward, primitive, and animal like, sub-humans, craven, emotional, immoral and shameful.

Intermarriage with other social group in most cases is strictly prohibited and unthinkable; as a result, they are strongly limited to marry from their own groups. The aspects like submissive greetings, commensality and restrictions of engagement in various associations are the channel in the course of which social marginalization are manifested. The 'Wood workers' have also been prohibited from almost all level decision making processes such as local peasant associations, or service cooperatives and when there are cases, they are provided to take part, they never acquired leadership positions. They have very limited political and judicial rights. In this regard, the norm, belief and traditional practices that characterize the 'Wood Workers' might have also contributed its part for both active and passive marginalization of them in the study area. Lack and limited access to social services such as education and health services, relegated resettlement, limited and unproductive land, hopelessness and voice lessens, lack of genuine social cohesion, and shame feeling are some of the effects of marginalization of 'Wood Workers' in the study area. It is found that some of the restrictions are still is definitely existed as they were long established.

Furthermore, due to marginalization in general and prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination in particular, 'Wood Workers' were left at a disadvantageous position in the study area. Consequently, poverty seems relatively severe in the case of 'Wood Workers' rather than the rest of peoples of the study area.

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